DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 169 076 TM 008 288

TITLE	A Parent's Guide to Standardized Aptitude and Achievement Testing.
INSTITUTION	National School Public Relations Association, Arlington, Va.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	16p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209 (Stock Number 411-13389, $0.50 ea., quantity discount available)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Achievement Tests; *Aptitude Tests; *Criterion Referenced Tests; *Intelligence Tests; *Norm Referenced Tests; Parent Role; *Student Testing; Test Interpretation; Test Results

ABSTRACT

Basic test terminology is explained for parents of school children. Terms which are defined include aptitude, achievement, criterion referenced tests, norm referenced tests, and intelligence quotient. Brief discussions of the advantages and limitations of tests are included. Testing is seen as providing valuable information to the school, students and parents. Three suggestions made to parents to help their children do well on tests include: (1) encouraging the child to take the test seriously; (2) avoiding upsetting the child prior to taking a test; (3) making sure the child has adequate sleep before the test and proper nourishment the day of the test. (MH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

A parent's guide to

Standardized Aptitude and Achievement Testing

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Cynthia C. Mesand

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

TM008 288

ED169076

What are standardized aptitude and achievement tests?

They are a way of finding out what kind of school work a child is capable of—and what kind he/she is presently doing.

Combined with other information like course grades and comments from teachers, these tests can help give a picture of the total child.

Many different standardized tests are available, but they are all designed to help give a better understanding of each child's skills and abilities.

Copyright 1978
National School Public Relations Association
1801 North Moore Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Stock Number 411-13389

What do "aptitude" and "achievement" actually mean?

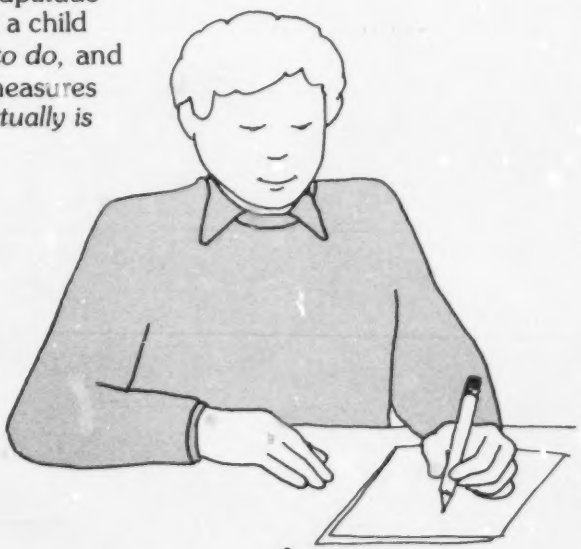
Aptitude

refers to the *ability* to do school work. Different tests exist to test a student's ability in different areas (math, language, etc.). Many factors come into play here, including cultural and family environment, familiarity with the English language (in which most of the tests are given), the child's health, and more.

Achievement

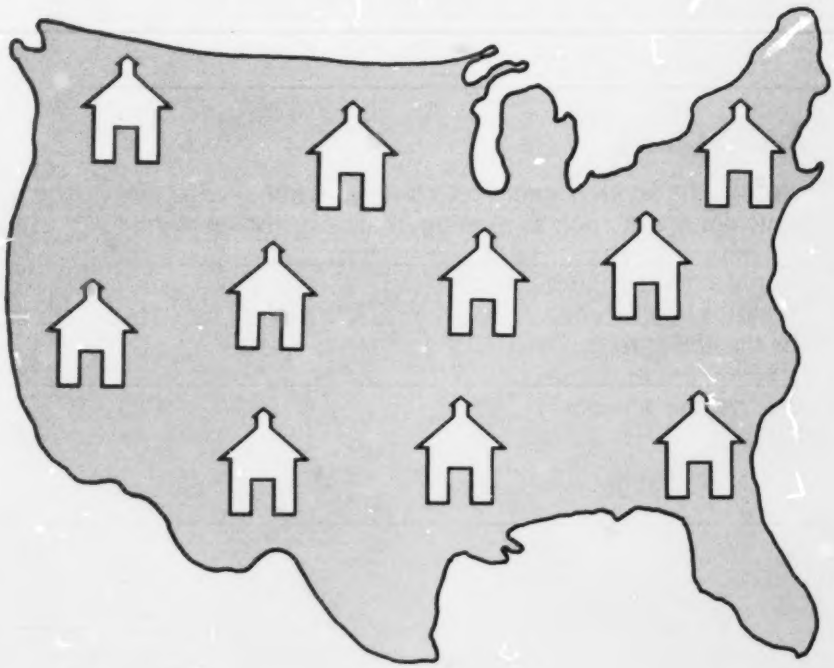
refers to the level of a student's *skills* and *knowledge* in particular areas, such as reading, math or problem solving.

Simply stated, aptitude measures what a child *has the ability to do*, and achievement measures what he/she *actually is doing*.



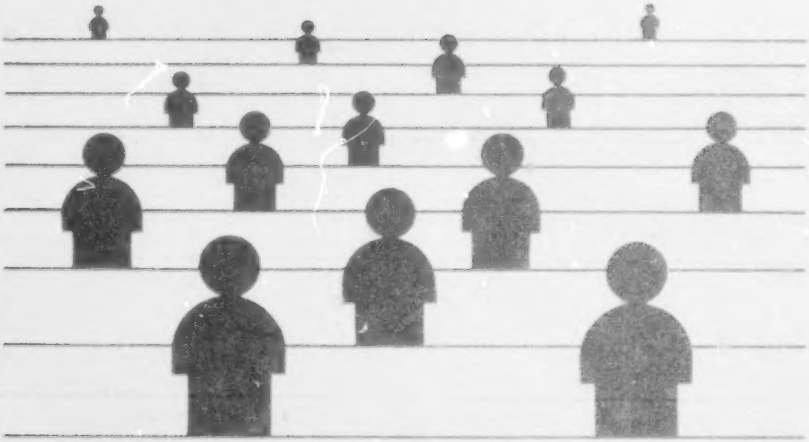
Why are these tests important?

Because they tell teachers and parents many things about each individual child—and about each school, too. The same test is given in schools all over the country (this is why they are called "standardized"), and the scores are based on the average performance of the children taking the test, usually called the "norm."



This means a student's scores can be compared to those of his classmates *and* those of children the same age in other schools. The tests help tell us what a child *can do* and *is doing* in relation to others in the same grade.

Once we know this, we can take steps to improve any weak areas and develop a better educational program for each child.



But remember— tests are only one indication

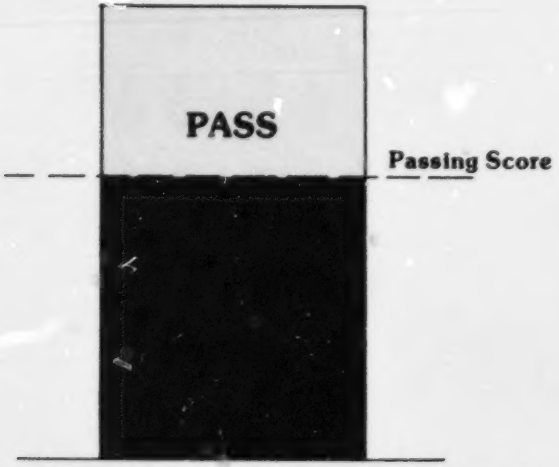
They measure certain things, but do not measure everything!

Test scores by themselves do not give a full picture of your child—as a student *or* as a person!

There are two major kinds of tests:

The most familiar is called a *"Criterion Referenced"* test in which standards are set up in advance to measure performance. An example would be a 10 question spelling test which every student with seven or more right answers passes.

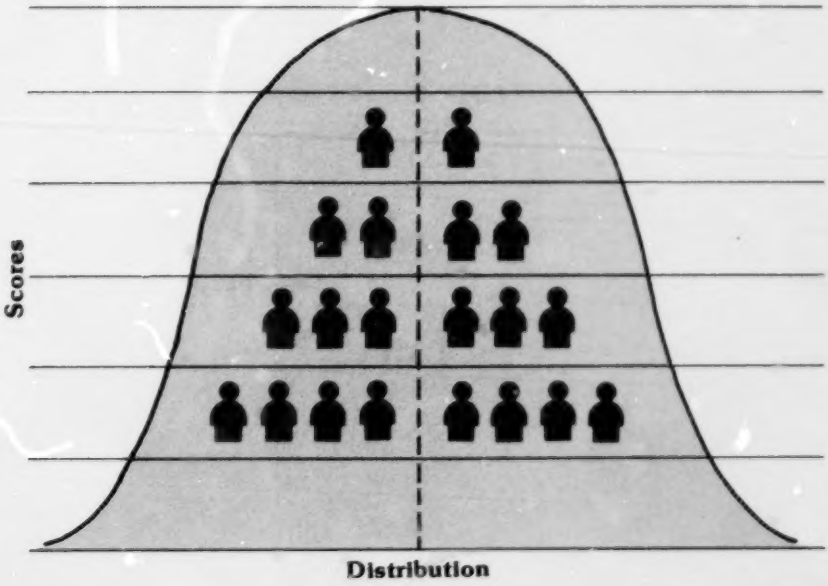
Criterion Referenced



So-called COMPETENCY TESTS have come into wide use throughout the country in recent years. These are criterion referenced tests in that students must get a certain score in order to "pass" (thus graduate or be promoted to the next grade). They are designed to show whether students have reached a particular level of skill or knowledge in a subject area, and are developed at the state or local level, not "standardized" nationally.

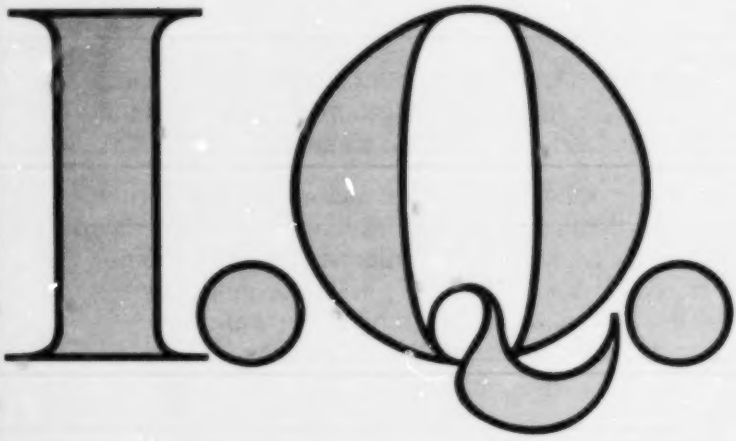
The other kind is the *"Norm Referenced"* test, in which a student's score is compared to the average score achieved by a nationwide sampling of students. Standardized aptitude and achievement tests are norm referenced tests, and scores are given in relation to a national norm.

Norm Referenced



Remember, the norm has nothing to do with passing or failing—it's simply a middle point. On any norm referenced test half of the students nationally will score above the norm, and half below.

A special word about



The I.Q. test is probably the most familiar example of a norm referenced test. The norm of I.Q. tests is 100—half score above 100, half below. Thus, if your child scores around 100, he/she has an "average" I.Q. There are no magic boundaries when "above average" becomes "genius," or "below average" becomes "retarded," but as scores get further away from the norm, more special attention is called for.

Remember, I.Q. tests do not actually measure "intelligence." At best, they measure a child's *ability* to do school work. I.Q. scores can change from year to year, depending on a variety of factors, so don't conclude your child's score is "permanent."

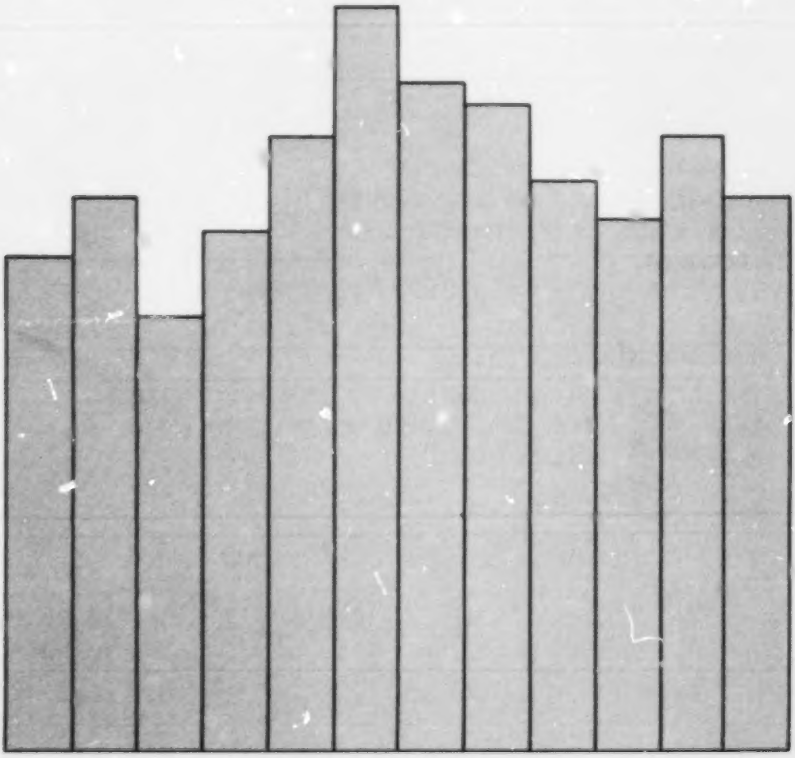
What do test scores really tell us?

They tell us how one student's performance compares to that of others in the same age group or grade, and they help us identify his/her strong and weak areas.

But remember, a variety of factors can have an affect on a student's scores, such as how he or she feels on the day the test is given, the conditions in the test room (was it crowded, noisy, hot, etc.?), advance preparation given by the school, and many others. Tests are not perfect, and do not give us all the answers about each child.

If scores show a significant weakness, parents should find out what special programs the school offers, and should ask what they can do at home to help.

Test scores *do* give a point of comparison, and can help us understand each student better. By checking scores from year to year, scores in different areas, aptitude and achievement scores, test scores and classroom progress, and by using personal understanding of each child, schools can develop improved programs to serve each one better.



Testing is a valuable educational tool

It Helps:

The School

which can compare the performance of its students to national norms to detect strengths and weaknesses in its programs.

The Student

whose needs and talents can be identified, and who can be guided into the best educational program to meet these needs.

The Parents

who can get a better understanding of their child's ability and performance in school.

Parents *can* help their children do better on tests—

Children differ in their abilities, of course, but here are some things you can do to help your child do his or her best:

1. Encourage your child to be serious about the tests and not see them as a nuisance, or as a break from "real" school work.

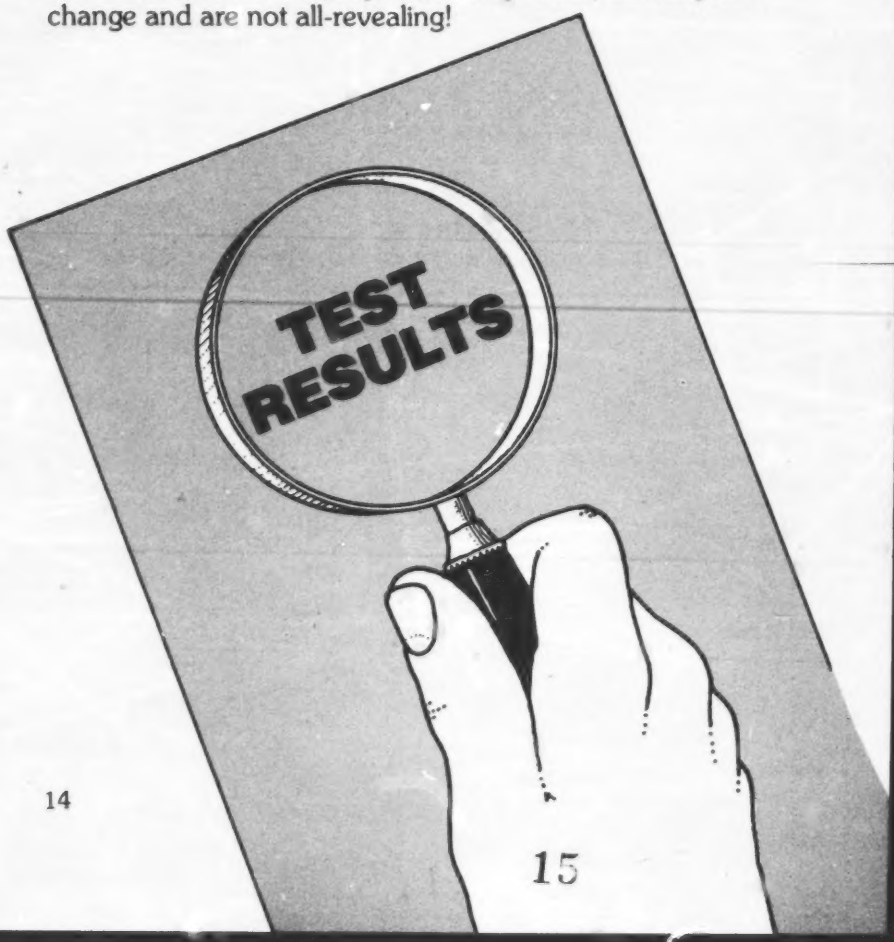
2. Try not to upset the child before the tests, such as by introducing family conflicts, etc.

3. Make sure the child gets a good night's sleep before the tests, and eats properly the day of the tests.

And remember, don't read too much into your child's test results!

School aptitude and achievement are only two of many factors that make up the total person. Your child has abilities and talents those scores do not measure.

Test scores are helpful and important, but they can change and are not all-revealing!



Used properly, aptitude and achievement testing can be a powerful educational tool.

It gives us a great deal of good information that can be used to help us understand each student better—which helps us give him or her the best possible education!

**And remember,
we are here to help.
Feel free to ask if you
have any questions
about our testing program.**